

Benedictine Historical Monographs IV

THE STORY OF THE
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

otherwise of
The Company of Adventurers of England
Trading into Hudson's Bay

by

GEORGE P. SCRIVEN
United States Army (Retired)

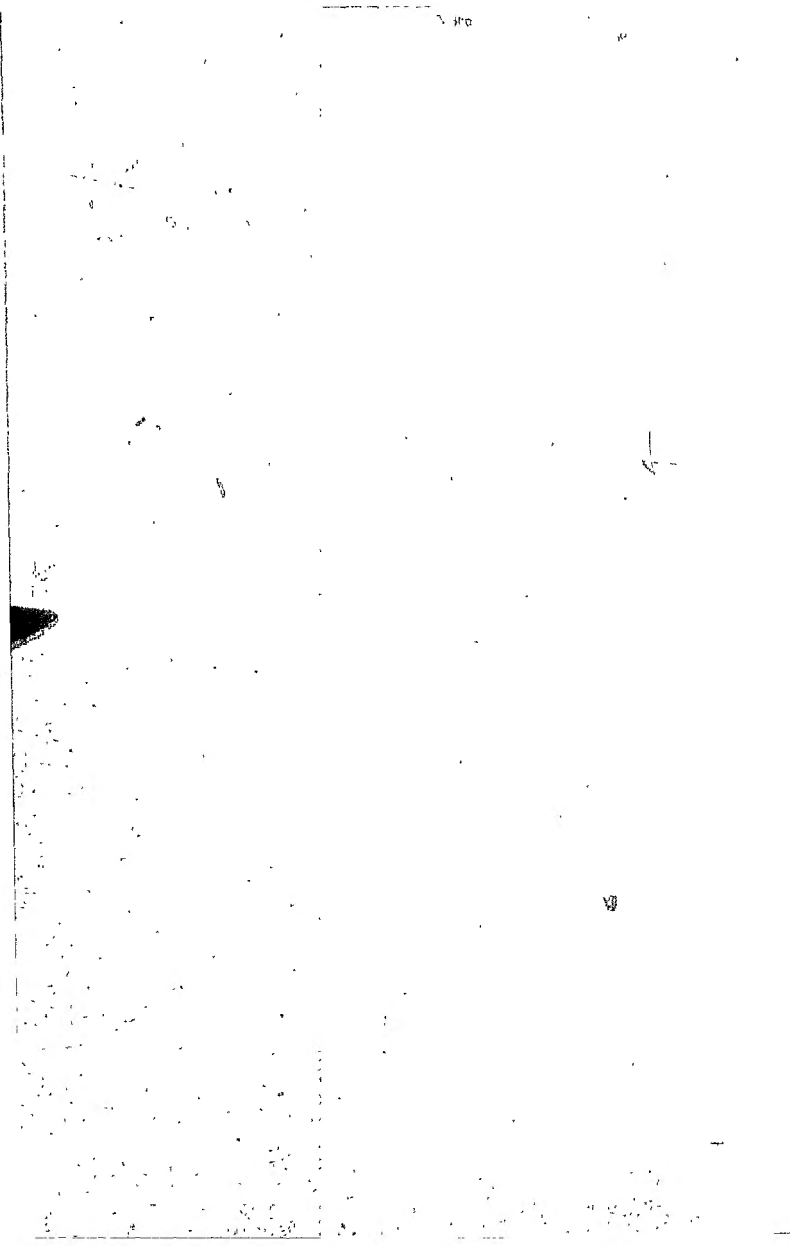


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*Coat-of-Arms of the Hudson's Bay Company, reproduced from
the oldest form in existence and dating prior to 1680*

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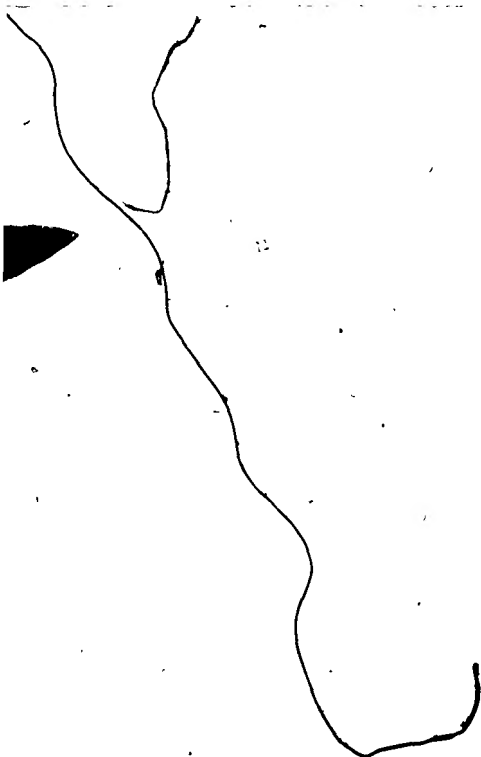
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The Story of the Hudson's Bay Company

otherwise

The Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay

By GEORGE P. SCRIVEN

SELDOM are life's ironies more clearly shown in history than by an event that occurred in England in the year 1667 when two French traders, disappointed in their efforts to compel a more active policy on the part of the fur companies then existing in New France by charter of the Crown, and discouraged on the rejection by their countrymen of their plans to extend the fur trade, turned to England in their dissatisfaction. There they succeeded in establishing an association of noblemen and gentlemen to undertake at their own charge to adventure the establishment of a regular and constant trade in Hudson Bay and to do other things, as will presently be seen. By so doing, they put into England's hand that weapon which was, some hundred years later, so effectively used to drive the Frenchman, pioneer settler of the Northwest, from the land.

The two adventurers from Canada, Radisson and Groseilliers by name, finding themselves stranded in Paris, turned to the Ambassador of England there, who gave them a letter entrusted to Groseilliers for delivery in London to the great Prince Rupert, cousin of Charles II. The prince, a great adventurer at heart, had been a soldier against Cromwell, a sailor against the Dutch, a pirate perhaps when other excitement failed, and was, as events proved, the very man to undertake so bold an enterprise. He received Groseilliers well, heard his glowing stories of the fur trade and was interested immediately: then was laid the foundation of England's stronghold in Canada, the Hudson's Bay Company.

In spite of all efforts by foreigner and fellow countryman, for 250 years this company has survived to the present day.

Henry Hudson had been left to die on the shores of the bay which bears his name in 1610. At that time explorers had sought the northwest passage for fabled gold. His voyages had been financially unprofitable, but now, fifty years later, more practical ideas prevailed. Prince Rupert's interest in the possibilities of the fur trade in the region about the bay led to the dispatch of the *Nonsuch*, a ketch of fifty tons, to undertake the adventure. This little craft, carrying Groseilliers, sailed in June, 1668, from Gravesend, accompanied by a still smaller ship called the *Eaglet*, which carried Radisson. Both crossed the Atlantic without mishap, but approaching the difficult waters of Hudson Strait, the captain of the *Eaglet*, despairing of success, turned tail for England, leaving the *Nonsuch* to carry on alone through the Straits into Hudson Bay, and to the unknown wilderness beyond. The passage of the bay was successfully accomplished and on September 29 of the year 1668 the *Nonsuch* dropped anchor at the south end of James Bay, arm of Hudson Bay, about latitude 51°, near the mouth of a stream coming from the east which was christened Rupert's River. Here the little band of adventurers landed "on the remotest shores of the New World," and constructed under direction of the experienced Groseilliers, a fortification of logs that they called Charles in honor of the king, but which was later known as Rupert's House. For a time no Indians were seen, but shortly afterward a band of Nodways appeared who were greatly astonished by the arrival of white men different from the occasional Frenchman, *coureur des bois* or bushranger they had known. They soon became friendly, however, under the skilful handling of Groseilliers, himself a bushranger, and promised furs when the season arrived. In the meantime Groseilliers, with extraordinary activity, traversed the interior of the country, made treaties not only with Nodways,

but with the Kilistineaux, the Ottawas and other men of the Algonquin race; as a consequence when the winter had passed—a winter so cold that nature appeared to the Englishmen like a carcass frozen to death, Indians, many of them strangers, came in from all parts of the bush with their pelts, eager to trade with the white men. By April, 1669, the ice swept out of the river with a roar and by June the heat had become almost tropical. The time had come to fit out the *Nonsuch* for return to England. She had carried through the winter well and on her departure was so deeply loaded, thanks to the exertions of Groseilliers, that she sank to the water line with the cargo of furs, mostly beaver. When she reached England so great was the satisfaction of the company of merchants who had sent her out that they determined to apply to the king for a Royal Charter. Mainly through the efforts of Prince Rupert, they obtained it after some delay. This charter was signed by Charles II and on May 2nd of the year 1670, the king in person presented it to Prince Rupert at Whitehall. The day was Friday and none but good results, contrary to superstition, seem to have come from the granting of this Great Charter, which has been characterized as one of the most celebrated instruments that ever passed from monarch to subject.¹

The Charter incorporating the Hudson's Bay Company reads in part: "Charles the Second, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of Faith, etc. To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting.

"Whereas Our dear and entirely beloved Cousin, Prince Rupert together with other noblemen, knights, and squires,

¹ See *The Hudson's Bay Company 1670 to 1920*, by Sir William Schooling, K. B. E., prepared in connection with the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the existence of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1920. To Sir William the writer is indebted for many of the facts set forth in this paper. The first stock book of the Company, still in existence, records that in 1667, some three years before the granting of the Charter, a share of the stock valued at £300 was presented by the Governor and Company to the Duke of York, afterward King James II, whose name heads the list. Prince Rupert, the Duke of Albemarle, three earls, and others provided various sums. Evidently the adventure was well supported from its inception.

and John Portman, citizen and Goldsmith of London, have, at their own great Cost and Charges, undertaken an Expedition for Hudson Bay—for the Discovery of a new Passage into the South Sea, and for the finding some Trade for Furs, Minerals, and other considerable Commodities, etc.

"And Whereas the said Undertakers, for their further Encouragement in the said Design, have humbly besought Us to incorporate them, and grant unto them, and their Successors, the sole Trade and Commerce of all those Seas, Streights, Bays, Rivers, Lakes, Creeks, and Sounds, in whatsoever Latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the Streight, together with all the Lands, Countries and Territories, upon the Coasts and Confines of the Seas, Streights, Bays, Lakes, Rivers, Creeks and Sounds aforesaid, which are not now actually possessed by any of our Subjects, or by the Subjects of any other Christian Prince or State—We give, grant, and confirm unto the said Governor and Company, and their Successors, the sole Trade and Commerce of all those Seas," etc. "With the Fishing of all Sorts of Fish, Whales, Sturgeons, and all other Royal Fishes, in the Seas, Bays, Inlets, and Rivers within the Premises, and the Fish therein taken, together with the Royalty of the Sea upon the Coasts within the Limits aforesaid, and all Mines Royal, as well discovered as not discovered, of Gold, Silver, Gems, and precious Stones, to be found or discovered within the Territories, Limies, and Places aforesaid, and that the said Land be from henceforth reckoned and reputed as one of our Plantation of Colonies in America, called Rupert's Land." And further "We create the said Governor and Company for the Time being and their Successors the true and absolute Lords and Proprietors of the same Territory, Limits and Places Aforesaid."¹

¹ See the argument of Mr. James Dodd, *The Hudson's Bay Company, Its Portion and Prospects*. The substance of an address delivered at a meeting of the shareholders in London Tavern on the night of January, 1866. Published in London. A valuable and now undoubtedly rare work, to be found in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

In addition to the things before specified, powers were given to the Company to make laws, impose penalties and punishments, and to judge in all cases civil and criminal according to the laws of England. Also to employ armed force, appoint commanders and build forts. Finally it was required of all admirals, and others of His Majesty's officers and subjects, to aid and assist in the execution of the powers granted by the Charter.

This celebrated instrument consists of five sheets of parchment, the outer elaborately decorated, and the whole carrying the Privy Seal. It is preserved in the principal Board Room of Hudson's Bay House in London. Schooling says of it: "It is an interesting experience to handle the old document and examine it in detail. Some unknown scribe wrote patiently for days on the skin of unknown animals, here and there he made mistakes, and we can see the erasures and corrections; but for us after all this long period of time, it is the symbol and the formal instrument of a history full of great consequences. It calls up pictures of early sailing vessels, Atlantic storms, and frozen seas, it carries us to factories and forts, embarks us in frail canoes for long journeys on rivers and lakes, and brings us in contact with the Indian tribes and the fur-bearing animals of the Company's great territory."¹

The Charter, like others of that day, was an outgrowth of the geographical activities of the latter half of the seventeenth and the early years of the eighteenth centuries which had given great impetus to trade and to the development of distant countries. Indeed it was in the reign of Elizabeth and that of the early Stuarts that the chartered company, in its modern sense, came into existence and became recognized as a settled method of procedure. So common was it in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that more than seventy of these companies were created in France alone.

¹Sir William Schooling, K. B. E., *The Hudson's Bay Company*, London, 1920, p. 6.

Limited liability companies did not yet exist and the great enterprises, such as the opening of the Americas, were far too extensive for the undertaking of private individuals. Consequently the chartered company was employed as able to give opportunity for the establishment of colonies. These when well managed carried on their undertakings in the development of possessions to a point so advanced that recognition by the mother Kingdom became advisable. Not only England and France, but Holland, Spain, and Portugal recognized the value of this method for opening up of unsettled and distant lands. Nevertheless many of the chartered companies failed through bad administration, want of capital or other difficulties. But the Hudson's Bay Company lived on and prospered, its charter unchallenged for nearly eighty years. Then in the year 1748, its very existence was threatened and an effort made to have its charter void by a petition to the Crown on the part of certain subscribers of an association for finding out a passage to the Western and Southern oceans of America "Who wanted all or part of Rupert's Land." This petition was refused, the effort failed and by this act it was acknowledged by the Crown that the Hudson's Bay Company had from 1670 to 1748 possessed the territory granted "without interruption or encroachment," that the charter was now rendered certain and its limits defined. For a time the result was final but later other attempts were made to hamper the Company and to overturn its charter; but none was successful. Always has the highest legal authority upheld the validity of the great Charter in law. It lasted as granted practically for two hundred years, up to the time when, by the birth of a new state, the old order was compelled to pass. Then indeed, the Hudson's Bay Company loyally gave over "To Her Majesty of England all rights of government, property, etc., in Rupert's Land." Yet in spite of the partial surrender of its rights, the spirit of the Hudson's Bay Company went

marching on; its flag continued to float over settlement, town and wilderness, over lake and mountain from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the international boundary to the shores of the Arctic Ocean—and perhaps, constructively, to islands which still lie undiscovered in the frozen seas.

Briefly, it may be added that before the surrender of its territories to the Dominion of Canada, the Company possessed "The freehold of two and a half millions of square miles of the earth's surface; a freehold nearly as large as Europe. The one sole estate of the kind now (1866) remaining in the world, a private corporation, lord of two and a half million of square miles."¹ A gift granted by the stroke of a kingly pen to some gentlemen adventurers of England not one of whom, perhaps, ever put foot on this vast estate. Besides the grant given in the original Charter which gave complete lordship and entire legislative, judicial and executive power within these vague limits (which the Company finally agreed to accept as meaning all lands watered by streams flowing into Hudson Bay), the corporation received also the rights to "the whole and entire trade and traffic to and from all havens, bays, creeks, rivers, lakes and seas into which they shall find entrance or passage by water or land out of the territories, ~~limies or places~~ aforesaid." After the first settlements were made on James Bay and at Churchill and Hayes Rivers, it was long before there was any advance into the interior, for in 1749, when an unsuccessful attempt was made in Parliament to deprive the Company of its Charter on the plea of "non-user," it had only some four or five forts on the coast, with about 120 regular employees. Although the commercial success of the enterprise was from the first immense, great losses, amounting before 1700 to £217,514, were inflicted on the Company by the French, who sent several military expeditions against the forts.²

¹ Dodd, *ap. cit.*

² Cfr. *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Hudson's Bay Co."

And what was this holding which the Charter christened Rupert's Land, but which was commonly known as the Hudson's Bay territory? It was the basin of great Hudson Bay whose limits, hardly defined to this very day, must have been to His Majesty as ill-defined as the boundaries of the lands of the great Cham himself. It was the heart of mighty Canada, in length some thirteen hundred miles, in breadth about six hundred; whose waters drain from Labrador to the Rocky Mountains and on the south from the ridges where the falling raindrop inclines with a gust of wind south into waters that flow into the tropic tides of the Gulf of Mexico or north into a stream that runs into the frozen ocean. On the old maps it is shown north and west of the two Canadas, Lower and Upper; east of British Columbia and the great Indian territories then shown in the extreme northwest; south to the boundary line, and north beyond range of man's knowledge. Too great for definition as a whole, it was vaguely divided into three parts: the first called the Granite Region, lying at the center. A vast forest territory covered with the soft pulp woods, that today form so great a part of the wealth of the Dominion. Here the fur animals abound and the minerals found and believed to exist lie in such abundance that their value cannot be measured. The deposits of aluminum are the greatest known, and gold is so plentiful as to make this region second to the Rand alone, in its production. A beautiful country, this heart of Rupert's Land, advancing with roads, railroads and growing settlements; destined, perhaps, to be the home of countless settlers willing to live the simple life on the frontiers of the frozen north. The last spike will soon (1929) be driven in the railroad connecting Hudson Bay with the Canadian west.

Beyond and west of this basin lies the Coteau des Prairies and the Fertile Belt extending from the frontier far north into the Peace River country, but on the south contained in the basin of Lake Winnipeg, a great fresh water sea three

hundred miles long and fifty broad, that flows into Hudson Bay. This basin is some four hundred square miles in extent and made up for the most part of land suitable for cultivation; much of it within the Fertile Belt. "A country unsurpassed in productiveness, beauty and adaptability for industrial purposes,"¹ such were the words spoken of the region some sixty years ago. But what shall now be said of the prairies of Manitoba, the Saskatchewan and Alberta, the greatest of the wheat producing regions of the world? Merely to pass over the region is to realize that it has surpassed all early dreams of its fertility and that the climax has not yet come. "It contains more acres than England and Wales combined; and possesses a climate considered by the year more genial than that of Old Canada and many of the eastern States." Not alone in small grain is this region rich. "The country produces almost every crop and every plant which belongs to the Temperate Zone, and that with a fulness, fineness and luxuriance which few of our northern kingdoms can equal. Its summer isothermal passes through the Azores and the center of France."²

Such in general is the country which was conferred by the great Charter thrust into the hand of Prince Rupert by the King of England on that May day of long ago, in consequence of the voyage of a little ketch sent out to the further shore of Hudson Bay some seventeen months before and returned with proof of the value to civilized man of the furs found in this unknown country beyond the sea. To Radisson and Groseilliers, who instigated the voyage, therefore, the foundation of the Hudson's Bay Company was in large part due; yet to Prince Rupert, its first appointed Governor (1670-1683) who by his vision and power to act, made possible the expedition, is given the credit of being the founder. The verdict of history will stand, and Prince Rupert will ever be honored as the founder of the Great Company that

¹ *Foreign Affairs*. Jan., 1928. P. 2, "New Caledonia," Dodd. ² See Map attached.

conquered and held the north of America by methods of fairness and good will that carried on through two hundred years. Yet was Rupert only the builder of the structure planned in the brains of the Frenchmen and to them must be given in large measure the credit, not only for opening the Hudson Bay country to the white man but for the uplifting of petty barter in pelts, carried on by the pioneers or by little companies of traders operating under the control of adventurers of France; to the dignity of an almost national enterprise. By its daring activities in the field, its ceaseless strength against the forces of the northlands, and its friendly intercourse and honorable trade with the Indians, it built up an extensive and enduring commerce that gave occupation to thousands, perhaps millions of its people at home, and also made itself the greatest instrument that North America has known for the peaceful penetration of the wilderness and for the mastery and uplift of the savage. A force that ever conquered by fairness and square dealing; that never by hostile act invited armed resistance; that never engaged in an Indian war; and never in the course of its long life found it necessary to maintain an army. A proud record indeed, whose like can not perhaps be found in the advance of the conquering white man.

Probably the beginning of the success of the Company, as well as the Charter itself, was due in large part to the first rich cargo of furs brought back by the *Nonsuch*. These were sold privately at first, largely in the markets of Leipsic, Amsterdam, Paris and Vienna, the great centers of the fur trade of that day. But the traders of England soon awakened to the fact that London should have a hand in the game; and for this purpose in December, 1671, there were offered for sale at Garroway's Coffee House in London, 3,000 weight of beaver skins. Here gathered a distinguished crowd, among them the Prince of Wales, Prince Rupert, the Duke of York, even the satirical Dryden, who wrote of the occasion:

"Friend, once 'twas Fame that led thee forth
To brave the Tropich Heat, the Frozen North;
Late it was Gold, then Beauty was the Spur;
But now our Gallants venture but for Fur."

The auction was a great success as are the auctions of London town to this very day; and London took its place at the head of the world's trade in furs.

After the sale, definite methods of procedure were established by the Company at its meetings which were held first at John Horth's, pending the building of the Hudson's Bay House, and became important affairs having to do with questions of trade with a little known people, and with the cargoes sent out for barter with the northern Indians. It had happened that for some years the manufacture of beads and wampum for the trade with the Indians of New England had been going on in London and the Company believed that the Indians would barter anything for a few beads, a bit of scarlet cloth or some gaily colored feathers; therefore it was suggested that kickshaws or trinkets should be sent to the Hudson Bay. But Radisson, knowing the people of the north, especially the Eskimos, advised the London adventurers that these people would prefer weapons for killing or trapping game, knives, hatchets, kettles and the like; and for this reason the cargoes for two ships about to sail were made up of such articles.

The Company had now become a grand institution in London; its committee was weighed down with the sense of its own importance, an air of mystery hung about its doings, rumors spread through the town as to happenings at conferences held in secret, and the man in the street grew excited over rumors of the strange attributes of far away savages of whom he was profoundly ignorant. But ignorance and absurdity were only natural at that day and were due in part to the belief in the existence of a northwest passage to China. Therefore the natives of Rupert's Land were

thought to be akin to the peoples of the East, as the works of such writers as Dryden, Steele, even of later Goldsmith show. Indeed, as late as our own Cooper's day, the noble Redman was a highly idealized person. Consequently it was but natural in Rupert's time that the men of the Company should picture monarchs of the forest, ruling over proud and noble people whose ordinary attire was the fur of the sable, of the ermine or the beaver and who entered into treaties and exacted tributes after the fashion of the Cham of Tartary. "Petty chiefs and sachems were described," says the historian, "as kings and emperors, wretched squaws as queens." Indeed to the early English mind, the aborigine of North America was a picturesque dream; barter with him a romance.

But the fur trade had proved its value in England and attention was earnestly turned to its support abroad; but since the sailing of the *Nonsuch* in return from Hudson Bay, no vessels were seen on its shores until one day of August in 1669 a gun was heard off Rupert's River, and a sloop flying the colors of England dropped anchor in the stream. Then to the delight of Groseilliers, main prop of the post, Radisson, his brother-in-law, stepped ashore. The adventurers were reunited and the post awoke to new life; activities increased; trade prospered, and by 1671, a second trading post was established at Moose on the west coast of James Bay. After this Radisson and Charles Bailey, who had come out as Governor of Rupert's Land, explored to the north, made friends with the Indians on the west coast of the bay proper, and in the vicinity of what is now Port Nelson established York Factory, that later became the great fur capital of the north and stands today, like Moose Factory, an historical landmark of the Company. At that early day, however, less attention was paid to exploration and expansion than to the main business of obtaining furs. This business continued so to grow in profit and extent that others, particularly the

French of the south, desired to share it, claiming—with some show of justice—a right to the country north of Canada. Hence it happened in 1673 that the peace of the English at Fort Charles was disturbed by the arrival of some Frenchmen who had come overland to the shores of Hudson Bay the year before. They were of a party led by the Jesuit priest, Father Albanel, accompanied by two white men and six Indians who had been sent out by Talon, Intendant of New France; and were undoubtedly the first party travelling overland from Quebec to penetrate into those regions and to behold that vast expanse of water.¹ Shortly after their arrival, they did all they could to draw the Indians to them. The English at Fort Charles became uneasy. Governor Bailey and Groseilliers disagreed; finally quarrelled; and the latter, exasperated by ill-founded accusations, knocked the great man down and then departed for Quebec. He disappeared as a force in the affairs of the Company. Nor did Bailey long remain to trouble the pioneers, for in September, 1674, the sloop Prince Rupert arrived from England bringing William Lyddal as Governor. Conditions then improved and the business of the Company in England prospered; but a cloud was gathering over Hudson Bay due to French activities and jealousy; not unnatural, one would think, considering the claims of France to the country north of their own Canada, discovered, explored and occupied by them for more than sixty years. True, John Cabot had been the first to sight the coast off Cape Breton Island in 1497 and had there raised the flag of England, but only to sail away again and the people at home, unlike the Spaniards to the south, paid little heed to the discovery, for the England of that day hadn't yet become a maritime nation. Then it happened that the fishermen of the west coast of Europe

¹ Willson, Beckles, *The Great Company*, Toronto, 1899. But cfr. *The Jesuit Relations*, edited by Edna Kenton, New York, 1925, pp. 312 and 328, note. Also, *The Jesuit Relations*, in 73 vols., edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. XXVIII, note 32, and Vol. XLIX, note 14.

who swarmed across the western sea in search of cod and other things, opened up the mainland of the north of America. One of these mariners, Jacques Cartier by name, seaman of St. Malo, was sent out by the King of France some forty years after Cabot's landfall; he sailed to the Gulf of St. Lawrence—so named in honor of the saint on whose day the gulf was discovered—and carried on to the river of that name. This he ascended as far as the site of Montreal, where he established himself for a time and took over the great Indian country called Canada. Then he sailed away and for sixty years, although the fisheries and the fur trade were developed, little else was done by France to make good her discovery. About the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, de Champlain, the great explorer, who also at this time represented the interests of fur trading monopolies of France, ascended the St. Lawrence River and five years later, 1608; founded Quebec. Here a post was established and a systematic fur trade begun. A second post was built on the site of Montreal, after which Champlain pushed on up the St. Lawrence, fighting his way against the Algonquins and Iroquois, and travelled as far as the eastern end of Lake Huron itself. A great name in American history is that of Champlain, but in his own country he was perhaps most considered at that time as one of the Company of One Hundred Associates,¹ formed under the protection of Richelieu and given the monopoly of the trade of the St. Lawrence Valley. Still it was not chiefly the fur trade, but exploration and missionary work that led Champlain on his way, as was the case with other adventurers of the France of that day; they were bold and daring men and among the most adventurous of them all were Groseilliers and Radisson. These two *coureurs des bois*, as they were called, journeyed

¹In 1627, a charter was granted by Richelieu to the *Compagnie Des Cent Associes*, but in 1663 this was ceded to the Crown; and two years later a new Association called *La Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* was formed. This it was that offered the schemes of the two Frenchmen.



DOG CARIOLE



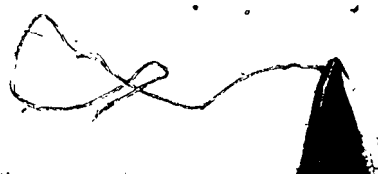
DOG SLEIGH



far over the country of New France mainly to the north and west; and among other achievements they built "somewhere west of Duluth the first fort and the first fur post between the Missouri and the North Pole. The tangible origin of the modern life of the great Northwest." On account of these many explorations it is clear, on the whole, that the claim of France to the north and west, perhaps to the region about the Hudson Bay was not without foundation in the year 1670. The French insisted too on the charter granted in 1627 by Louis XIII to some adventurers sent out to explore north of the St. Lawrence. But, says a recent Canadian commentator, no doubt truly, "The clause of the charter upon which French pretensions were based clearly indicated that the charter did not go further than the land occupied by the predecessors of Louis XIV, which was small indeed." When an examination is made into the facts of the voyages and expeditions alleged to have been undertaken by the French prior to 1672, it is difficult to arrive at any but a conclusion that the French claim has no foundation in fact.¹

As a matter of history, however, in 1686 the French marched an expedition overland to Moose Factory, which they captured and occupied in grand manner in the name of "His Most Christian Majesty, the Most High, Most Mighty, Most Redoubtable Monarch, Louis XIV of the Most Christian Name, King of France and Navarre," and Lo, the poor Indian, was so deeply impressed that he allowed the Frenchmen, after other captures, to return to Quebec with 50,000 beaver skins as a trophy. The outraged adventurers were left to mourn and to petition the King, now James II, that Duke of York who had succeeded Prince Rupert as Governor on the death of the latter. Thus encouraged, the French continued their depredations on the Company's ships and forts in the Bay, though but one fort was surrendered. Between 1682 and 1688, that is, in time of peace between the mother-

¹ Willson, Beckles, *The Great Company*.



countries, hostilities continued on the Bay; the French took from the Company in all seven ships and their cargoes in addition to six forts and factories and their valuable stores; little affairs which the English King mentioned in his next declaration of war. Nevertheless, the trade in pelts thrived and about the beginning of King William's reign, the Company reported that "Our Returns in Beavers this year (by God's Blessing) are modestly expected to be worth £20,000."

But at this late day speculation is idle as to the rival claims of England and France to the rights of the fur trade in Rupert's Land. In appearance, the struggle was a contest between the two nations; in reality it was largely a conflict between the strong and efficient Hudson's Bay Company and the poor and inefficient French *Compagnie du Nord*. As it went on, Fort Nelson, the key to the position, was captured and recaptured. Certain rights of territory were given to the French by the treaty of Ryswick in 1697 but later by the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Hudson Bay was ceded to Great Britain; and at last the Company entered into full possession of its territory. But when hostilities between France and England again broke out in 1744, the Company grew uneasy and made effort to put up its own fight against both France and Spain. Then the conclusive victory of Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham put an end to that strife of the wilderness that had raged for nearly a hundred years, and gave nominal peace to Hudson Bay and a real future not only to the fur trade but to Canada. The lilies of France disappeared from the north of America¹ and then the meteor flag of England flew unchallenged over Rupert's Land. Of course the effect upon the fur trade was immediate; barter with the French was destroyed, to the dismay of the Indians until they learned to turn to Hudson's Bay people by whom

¹ Except, of course, from the Islands of Miquelon and St. Pierre, allowed to remain under the French flag as shelters for her fishermen. Of course no reference need be made to Louisiana.

they were given better consideration, as they soon learned. But, however, even as late as 1782, the French, still hankering for Hudson's Bay territory, attacked the Company's station and captured Fort Prince of Wales and York Factory though only to restore them, as we shall see. It was a last effort of the French in this fur country and closes, says Schooling, "one chapter of the story of France and the great Company." Another chapter was to begin during the Great War, when the Company undertook the purchase and transportation of vast supplies in aid of France and gave marked and important assistance to the Allies.

From what has been said, it seems evident that in its early years of occupation of the Hudson Bay country, the Company did not have everything its own way. For a long time it made little effort to open up the hinterland beyond the Bay, perhaps because the adventurers found difficulty enough in holding what they possessed and in collecting and sending to England their furs. But presently there appeared on the scene a youth named Henry Kelsey, an enthusiastic explorer, who volunteered to open the Churchill River country to the west and to establish a new post there. He was allowed to make the attempt but at first without result; finally in 1691 he set out accompanied by a party of Assiniboines, travelled some seventy miles by canoe, marched three hundred miles through pathless bush to a prairie country some fifty miles in extent, and continued beyond by woodland, river and lake for some eighty miles where he encountered many beaver, was nearly swallowed by bears, and at last met the buffalo, the first white man, says the record, to see the bison of the plains. First of Englishmen perhaps, since as we know from the old Spanish archives, good old Cabeza de Vaca encountered these "cows," some hundred and fifty years before Kelsey was born; to say nothing of the men of Coronado who chased, and were chased by them, on the plains of Texas long before a white man had reached the

shore of Hudson Bay. However, the expedition of Kelsey did much to extend the knowledge and influence of the English in the west. He took possession of the region in the name of the Company, secured trade with the Indians, and probably penetrated well into the country of the Saskatchewan Province of today. After this expedition, the English for long years showed no great activity in exploration.

Not so the French, whose missionaries and traders kept pushing on continually to the north and west. Of these explorers, Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Varendrye was one of the greatest. Accompanied by his sons, and largely in the interests of the fur traders of Montreal, he traversed the north shore of Lake Superior, built forts on Rainy Lake and the Lake of the Woods, and in 1733 descended the Winnipeg River to its outlet on the lake, which he crossed, and ascended the Assiniboin. Later he pushed west into the country of the Mandan Indians and came within sight of the Rocky Mountains.

So it seems that in spite of its foothold on Hudson Bay, the Company in the early years did little beyond gathering furs. In fact the honors lay with the French during a hundred and fifty years of American explorations in the north. This was in great measure due to the efforts of her churchmen, her missionaries and her traders; while the English on the other hand, with the exception of the Kelsey expedition, did little during that time. Forty-eight years after Kelsey, an English sailorman, Samuel Hearne by name, mate of a ship in the Company's employ, made a considerable exploration. It was in consequence of persistent rumors regarding the existence of copper on the great river of the north now called the Coppermine, specimens of the ore having been shown by the Indians, that Hearne was selected to ascertain the latitude and longitude of this river's mouth and to map the intervening country. A man's job indeed, since from Fort Prince of Wales, whence he started, to the Arctic Ocean

into which the Coppermine empties, is a distance of not less than a thousand miles as the crow flies. As travelled by Hearne and his Indians it may well have been half as far again, through pathless forests, by unknown lakes and rivers, across mountains perhaps, and through the Bad Lands of the north, those wastes practically unexplored and unknown to this very day. However, Hearne succeeded; but success required three efforts. He reached the Arctic Ocean at the mouth of the Coppermine River, in July, 1771. "The first white man to reach the northern sea from the interior."¹ This happened eighteen years before Mackenzie followed to the Arctic the great river that bears his name. It was a magnificent exploit, marred indeed by Hearne's later folly, but in itself a grand fight against cold and starvation, for, says Hearne in the account of his privations, "We have fasted many times two whole days and nights; twice upwards of three days, and once near seven days, during which we tasted not a mouthful of anything except a few cranberries, water, scraps of old leather and burnt bones. On these pressing occasions I have frequently seen the Indians examine their wardrobe which consisted chiefly of skin clothing and consider what part could best be spared. Sometimes a piece of old, half rotten deer skin and others a pair of old shoes were sacrificed to alleviate extreme hunger." Their land transport was, for the most part, Indian women. Of them, says a chief with the party, "When all the men are heavy laden they can neither hunt nor travel to any considerable distance, and in case they meet with success in hunting, who is to carry the product of their labor? Women were made for labor; one of them can carry or haul as much as two men do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, keep up our fires at night, and, in fact, there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or for any length of time in this country without their assistance.

¹ Willson, *op. cit.*

Women, though they do everything, are maintained at a trifling expense, for as they always act as cooks, the very licking of their fingers in scarce times is sufficient for their subsistence."

Up to its time, the expedition of Samuel Hearne was the greatest attempt made by the Hudson's Bay Company to explore Rupert's Land; and although after his return, orders were sent out from London to continue exploration to the west and some feeble attempts were even made, little was accomplished. True, men were available, since by this time many active and adventurous Scots had cast their lot with the Company, but inertia ruled and for many years the advance of the white man into the west was due to individual traders or to organizations from the south that were rivals, even the enemies of the old Company. Indeed for some years it seemed that the servants of the Company had sunk into a slough of indifference and lethargy. This was shown by the dastardly surrender of two of the important posts on Hudson Bay to the breed. Of these the first was the powerful Fort Prince of Wales at the mouth of the Churchill, built in 1734 to replace the original wooden structure. It was of solid masonry, the most northern fortress on the continent of North America, "scarcely inferior," says Willson, "in strength to Louisberg or Quebec." It had been allowed to run down, however, when one August day of the year 1782, a sentinel spied three French warships off the coast. Thereupon panic seized the garrison, which consisted of but thirty-nine men and the Governor, no less a person than the great Samuel Hearne. He who had so well proven his personal courage by his Arctic journey, now showed the white feather. Hastily he snatched up a white tablecloth and incontinently waved it from the parapet in token of surrender; whereupon the Frenchmen comfortably marched in without striking a blow. A few days later, encouraged by this timidity, the French commander pushed south to Port Nelson, near which stood

York Factory, garrisoned by sixty white men and twelve Indians and defended by thirteen cannon, twelve and nine pounders; these guns were promptly thrown into the ditch, but on the ramparts twelve swivel guns still remained, and within was an abundance of small arms and ammunition and the place was provided with water, hogs and cattle. Nevertheless, the trembling Governor, "Who knew nothing of war," says the story, "and had a wholesome dread of the fighting man and of the brutal and licentious soldiery, as it were," begged the surgeon for a drink to steady his nerves. He was given a tumbler of raw spirits of wine, since there was nothing else at hand, and this he gulped; thereupon he was so braced to his work and so infused with courage that he declared he would shoot the first man who fired a gun. The French gave him two hours to surrender but he needed no such time and ten minutes later hauled down his flag. To their credit be it said, his council pleaded with him to hold out, but to no purpose, and York Factory surrendered without a blow to La Perouse, who commanded a half-starved, half-shod body of Frenchmen, worn out by fatigue and hard labor. Not a man of them was familiar with the country. J.

It is fortunate, no doubt, that the English and not the French permanently gained control of the fur country. Their methods of trade were better and their treatment of the Indians wiser, since they made friends of them, whereas the French made enemies. This was shown by control of Fort Bourbon, of which Willson relates that, "A few more years of French occupation and the forests and rivers of the Bay would know its race of hunters (the Indians) no more. Many hundreds lay dead within a radius of twenty leagues from the fort, the flesh devoured from their bones. They had lost the use of the bow and arrow since the advent of the European and they had no resource as cultivators of the soil; besides their errant life forbade this. Pressed by a long

hunger, parents had killed their children for food; the strong had devoured the weak. One of these unhappy victims of civilization and commercial rivalries confessed that he had eaten his wife and six children." As to the relations of the Hudson's Bay Company with the Indians with whom they came in contact, it may be well to quote the Marquis of Lorne, who, in 1881, when Governor of Canada, paid a high tribute to the Company when he said: "Let me advert for one moment to some of the causes which have enabled settlers in the vast Northwest country to enjoy in such peace the fruits of their industry. Chief among these must be reckoned the policy of kindness and justice which was inaugurated by the Hudson's Bay Company in their treatment of the Indians. The wisdom and righteousness of their dealing on enlightened principles, which are fully followed out by their servants today, gave the cue to the Canadian Government."

Be that as it may, the cowardly surrender of the forts indicates the lack of spirit which seems to have prevailed, at least among some of the servants of the Company at Hudson Bay; and this of course increased opposition to the Company's control of the fur trade at this time. Montreal now became English in fact, if not in feeling. The merchants and traders spread through the fur country; the *coureur de bois*, the *bois-brûlé*, those turbulent, restless descendants of the French voyagers and the Indian women, went among the Indians. Even the white men pushed into the wilderness, white men no longer of England or of Scotland, but of America, in search of adventure and trade. Still the conservative Scots, who by now made up a large part of the Company's servants, held their own in trade, not only because of their proven honesty, but because their goods were superior and their manner of life more decent. Yet rivalry was lessening the output of the Company; and presently it happened that these merchants of Montreal organized them-

selves into a new fur company, which was called at the instigation of Joseph Frobisher, the North-West Company, more familiarly known as the Northwesters. About this time a young Scotchman, Alexander Mackenzie by name, came upon the scene and after serving in the offices at Montreal, and later making a daring expedition among the Indians, he was sent by the North-West Company to Fort Chipewyan at the head of Lake Athabasca, nearly midway between Hudson Bay and the Pacific Ocean. There he lived for eight years among the natives, who had been found by Hearne, and who still traded with Fort York.

It was in 1789 that Mackenzie, later Sir Alexander Mackenzie, somewhat against the wishes of his commercial associates, determined to explore the north. With four canoes he set out in June of that year on his voyage to the Arctic. Leaving Athabasca, he reached Great Slave Lake in about a week's time, then entered the Mackenzie River, first of white men to see it; and after many adventures travelling among unknown strange peoples, Indians and Esquimeaux, of whom I have no space here to tell, Mackenzie ran into the northern solitudes where, says his narrative, "The red fox, the reindeer, flocks of beautiful plover, some venerable white owls and several large gulls were the only natives."¹ In July of the year 1789, he stood on the promontory of Whale Island, the Arctic Ocean before him. Then he returned to Fort Chipewyan.

But Mackenzie's greatest expedition was yet to come. In October, 1792, he again started from Lake Athabasca, this time to ascend the Peace River, which, as he supposed, would lead him to the Pacific Ocean. He wintered at the extreme western posts, among the Beaver and Rocky Indians, as they were called, and in the following spring pushed up the Peace, encountering almost incredible difficulties; through cañon and by mountain passes to the further slopes

¹ Willson, *op. cit.*

of the Rocky Mountains; then on through the unknown wilderness, in a journey whose record is well worth the reading. On this march his men carried on their backs, their pemmican, and other essentials, and each of the Canadians was laden with a burden of about ninety pounds, besides gun and ammunition. On they stumbled over mountain, valley and stream, until they came at last to a river that ran west into the Pacific Ocean at Cape Mezies. Here he painted on a rock the simple words, "Alexander Mackenzie from Canada by land the 22nd day of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three," less than a year after the time when Vancouver proved the existence as an island of the land that bears his name. Undoubtedly Mackenzie was the first Briton to cross the country now known as Canada; yet he was not the first to cross the continent of America, a credit sometimes patriotically if mistakenly given, since our old acquaintance, Cabeza de Vaca, of Spain, had made the journey a century and a half before. But Mackenzie was the first white man to cross British Columbia and to reach the Pacific Ocean by land, which he did a dozen years before the American pathfinders, Lewis and Clark, came to the shores of the Columbia River. Indeed he was the first to touch the borders of mighty Canada at its four limits, north, south, east and west. He was followed by the pathfinders, Stuart and Fraser, by whom British Columbia, or New Caledonia, as the early Scots christened it, was opened to the world of trade in the first years of the nineteenth century, an achievement in no way due to the Hudson's Bay Company but to the fighting Northwesters. Indeed, the old Company did not acquire rights west of the Rockies until the consolidation of the two companies in the year 1821. Meantime, in 1792, Captain George Vancouver of the Royal Navy opened the coast and circumnavigated the magnificent island that bears his name. Thus with the exploration of Mackenzie and the proof given by Fraser that the river

named after him and the Columbia were different streams, Canada west of the Rockies—mighty British Columbia, was opened to the world. But claims still persisted, on the part of both Russia and the United States, disputing the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company in the north. The claims of Russia to what was then known as the Siberia of America were the outcome of a dream of Peter the Great and of the great Catherine. They were based on the discoveries of Bering, through which the Russians had acquired a foothold on the American coast and had begun to threaten rivalry in the fur trade. Russian hunters and traders from Siberia extended their explorations to North America. The expedition founded a settlement on the Island of Kodiak in 1781 and various enterprises followed so that by 1799 the Russian American Fur Company was given a charter at St. Petersburg. The same year New Archangel was founded on the Island of Sitka and presently Russia declared ownership of the North Pacific coast as far down as latitude 51° . The United States protested, but a conclusion was reached by treaty in 1824 by which the boundary was fixed at the celebrated parallel $54^{\circ}40'$. The following year an agreement was reached between America and Great Britain: Russia agreed to relinquish all claims to territory below $54^{\circ}40'$, and so far as Great Britain was concerned, to relinquish all claims to the interior land occupied by the Hudson's Bay Company, up to the frozen ocean. About the same time negotiations were entered into between the United States and Great Britain regarding ownership of the north Pacific coast and continued for years; the Hudson's Bay Company meanwhile urging England repeatedly to abandon no territory rightfully owned by the Crown. Thereupon the Oregon question arose. It was based on claims urged by the United States, strongly supported by the people of the western states, to the whole of Oregon; and the cry arose, "Fifty-four forty or fight." This was the latitude of the southern limit of Russian America

and matters grew serious; war threatened. Presently, however, the good sense of both the United States and England prevailed; war was avoided; and by the treaty of 1846, the forty-ninth parallel, already fixed as a boundary as far as the Rocky Mountains, was carried west to the Pacific, and remains the boundary between United States and Canada to this day.

The treaty, however, was not defined clearly as to certain water rights until 1872, when the German Emperor, who had been chosen as arbitrator, gave decision in favor of America. The boundary question was settled, although certain difficulties in the Red River country had come up, but these were arranged and the frontier defined. In the course of these troubles, the Hudson's Bay Company asked the British Government to give over to the Company the Island of Vancouver, a somewhat remarkable request; yet it was granted, chiefly through the influence of Earl Grey and the remarkable despatch of Lord Elgin, Governor General of Canada in 1848, who testified, "I am bound to state that the result of the enquiries which I have hitherto made is favourable to the Company and that it has left on my mind the impression that the authority which it exercises over the vast inhospitable regions subject to its jurisdiction is, on the whole, very advantageous to the Indians More especially it would appear to be a settled principle of their policy to discountenance the use of ardent spirits." However, the grant of Vancouver Island made to the Company in 1849 lasted but ten years, when this beautiful island was given back to the Crown and the Company's rule over it ceased. Thereupon James Douglas, afterward Sir James Douglas, former chief factor of the Company became Governor under the Crown. At last the Hudson's Bay Company was free of its own estate.

In the discoveries of the north and west, the aristocratic but inert company of adventurers had small part, though

the fur trade posts had multiplied and thrived. A peculiar traffic was this trade. As early as 1690 it was regulated by the Company and its methods fixed. In those days when the skins were brought by the Indians to a factory, as some posts were called, the Indians entered the stockade three or four at a time; passed the pelts of beaver, marten, fox, or feathers as the case might be, through a small aperture in the side of the store house, where presided two officials of the Company known as traders. No other servants of the Company were allowed to have direct intercourse with the Indians. In return the Indians or trappers received for their pelts, at a rate fixed by the Company, powder, shot, sugar, tobacco, kettles and many other things, the value of which was reckoned in beaver skins. Among the articles listed was the vile compound known as English brandy, which was valued at the highest price of exchange: four skins per gallon. Later, the coming of the Indians for the purpose of trade became a ceremony, the event of the year. By 1730, natives who had journeyed perhaps a thousand or more miles, from Athabasca for instance, to York Factory arrived in numbers, sometimes many hundreds. It is estimated that six hundred canoes containing a thousand Indians—not counting women—came annually into this post. But no regularity marked their coming; the length of their annual journeys varied and were often made under circumstances of great hardship and difficulty. The arrival at the journey's end, the factory, was an important event. If the flotilla of canoes was under the command of one captain, his boat, flying a small flag at the stern, was placed in the center; if two or more chiefs were present, their canoes trailed in the flanks. Before reaching the fort, a halt was made, to spruce up, as it were; the leaders assembled to smoke and arrange the coming ceremony, the women as usual doing the work of gathering brush and fag-gots for the fire and the cooking. The men consulted together in order to arrange the details of approach and

commerce. After camping, the Indians re-embarked and approaching the fort, fired a salute from such guns as they had, in honor of the Governor. The latter returned the compliment by firing two or three of the small cannon of the fort.

On landing, the bundles of furs were carried ashore for the most part by the convenient women, and the Indians disembarked. Whereupon the great man, the factor, who had been officially warned of the arrival, sent his trader to conduct the visitors into the fort. Here seats were provided in the trading room and the pipe was brought out. Now this ceremony of the pipe, common to the Indian tribes from the earliest times, was, as we know, a symbol of friendship and good faith, a conclusion of war and a prelude to trade; and because the opening of trade was a marked occasion, the ceremony of the pipe was a solemn one. It was begun by the factor, who, taking the pipe in both his hands, with its highly ornamented stem three or four feet long, pointed it first to the east whence comes the sun; then upwards to the zenith; then to the west where the sun sets; and then to the nadir. After this he drew two or three strong puffs and passed the pipe on to the principal chief, who in turn passed it to the next in consequence. So it went around the whole party with the exception of the women. The tobacco consumed, the factor whirled the pipe three times around his head, then deliberately laid it down. Whereupon a loud "Ho!" was shouted, speeches made and afterwards the trading began. The meaning of the old ceremony is interesting. Interpreted it signified, "Whilst the sun shall visit the different parts of the world and make day and night; peace, firm friendship, and brotherly love shall be established between the English and the Indians, and the same on the latter's part. By twisting the pipe over the head, it was further intended to imply that all persons of the two nations whomsoever they were, shall be included in the friendship and brotherhood; then

concluded or renewed.”¹ On his visit to the fort, the chief was dressed out by the Company in a coat of red or blue; waistcoat and breeches; shirt and stockings, one red and the other blue (for what reason I cannot guess, although the same treatment of legs was seen at the grand barbaric coronation of the late Czar of all the Russians); and he was presented with a felt hat adorned with three ostrich feathers. This shows that the Company “spared no expense to make the wilderness ceremony imposing.”² The second in command was also bedecked at the expense of the Company but with less grandeur. And now that the introduction, or curtain raiser was over, bread and prunes were placed before the chief; with which he stuffed both stomach and pockets. Afterward a two-gallon keg of brandy was brought in; pipes and tobacco were presented. When the time came for the chief and his followers to return to their camp this was done with ceremony. At the head of the returning Indians a halbert and ensign were borne; then a drummer followed sounding a march, then came servants bearing gifts of bread, prunes, tobacco and brandy, while behind marched the chief with lordly strides smoking his pipe and conversing with the factor by his side. The tent reached; its floor strewn with fine brush, the brandy was deposited; later it was broached and all the Indians became gloriously drunk. Brotherly love was forgotten at least on occasion, for at one of these sprees, it is related, such a pitch of drunkenness was reached that the Indians fought among themselves silently during the darkness of the night; and next morning two dead were found horribly mutilated. The debauch of course lasted while the brandy held out and sometimes for two or three days. Then the calumet was smoked and the trading began. Later the use of trade spirits was stopped. The trading stations of the Company are dotted over the immense region

¹ Willson, *op. cit.*

² *Id.*

(excluding Canada proper and Alaska), which is bounded east and west by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and north and south by the Arctic Ocean and the United States. From these various stations the furs are despatched in part to posts in Hudson Bay and the coast of Labrador for transportation to England by the Company's ships, and in part by steamboat or other conveyances to points on the railways.¹

In the early days, for instance when the first cargo of the *Nonsuch* was stored aboard, the pelts were almost wholly of beaver. It was these beaver skins which largely influenced the formation of the Company and the grant of the Charter. Gradually the variety of furs increased, as may be seen by the furs now exhibited during the show made by the Hudson's Bay Company the week prior to one of its annual auctions in London—a show that contains perhaps the finest pelts known to the civilized world. After the World War came a lapse, but it is believed at the present writing that the London market is coming into its own. The Company's grading of furs, in this the greatest fur market of the world, is accepted as the standard by buyers² and sellers everywhere. The number exhibited is legion; even to name the variety of skins would require more space than can here be given. They are now gathered from all parts of the world, but of the earlier days the Governor of the Company says, "In the days when the Company's dominion marched with the fur trade, the beaver was the most desired fur. It was the rule of the Company to restrict each district to the

¹Cfr. *Encyc. Brit.*, "Hudson's Bay Co."

²It may not be out of place to quote here the following from an Associated Press dispatch, (Washington, D. C., *Star*, January 30, 1928), as follows: "It isn't often that a farmer can pack his crop into one railway express car and collect a cool million for it. But a firm of Wisconsin farmers has just done that thing. They are silver fox farmers. The shipment was received here (New York) for the January fur auction and it consisted of 6,536 skins. It was insured for its full value against all possible mishaps. Armed guard stood watch over its cargo day and night on its journey."

"This single shipment was greater than all the silver fox furs marketed at the New York auction 15 years ago."

collection of a certain fixed number of beaver skins. We discouraged the hunting of beaver, or any other pelt, out of season, and strictly prohibited the killing of beaver in summer. In former times, when the Indians had the trapping in their hands, they loyally backed this policy which was as much to their advantage as to our own, and the pelts taken from each beaver colony were seldom in excess of what would keep the number stationary. This wise husbandry maintained . . . the stock on which the industry depends, but today there is undoubtedly serious risk of depletion due to reckless and indiscriminate slaughter, in and out of season, of the beaver and other beautiful fur-bearing animals which make for the life and prosperity of those northern regions. . . . We have, however, long realized that, while conservation is necessary in the best interests of the fur trade, it represents a negative policy, and it may be possible to adopt more positive measures. Of such is the farming of fur-bearing animals, and experiments have already passed the stage in which success was dependent upon the sale of breeding stock, and farms are now becoming a source for the supply of pelts. While the value of such pelts sold from fur farms in Canada in 1925 was only about 4 per cent of the total fur production, it is nevertheless an indication which we think it desirable to follow. We have, therefore, acquired a share interest in two fox farms in Prince Edward Island, and look upon this not merely as an experiment but as a step in extending our fur trade to the three Maritime Provinces, in which so far we have never had any representation.”¹

The Indians, in these early days, received for their pelts not money for which they could have no use, but articles of trade. The first outfit of 1672 was made up of two hundred fowling pieces, powder and shot, two hundred brass kettles,

¹ From the report of Mr. Charles R. Sale, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company at a general court of the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, on June 28, 1927.

twelve gross of knives and two thousand hatchets, for in the beginning the wants of the Indians were few. But these increased, appetite grew with the eating, and today articles of trade include traps, guns, ammunition, twine nets, knives, hatchets, fishing tackle, needles, paint, groceries, canned goods, musical instruments, stationery, tobacco, candy, toys, footwear, and many other articles including the justly celebrated blankets of the Company, and a thousand other things which make up the stock of distant stores. The articles for sale or barter are rated according to a tariff fixed by the Company, a system established in the eighteenth century. The values were fixed in beaver skins which in turn developed a nominal currency, the so-called "made beaver" system, used for convenience of trade. By this system, quills of porcupine, small pigs of wood, and later brass coins were issued by the Company and designated as beaver or skins; these were given to the Indian in exchange for his pelt instead of money at a rate of exchange fixed and he in turn would exchange his "made beaver" for food, powder, tobacco or other things desired. A trading counter was also used in barter with the Eskimo of the north, and in addition, a paper currency of the Company known as "Blankets," with denominations £, 5s, 1s, were put in circulation at a later time. But as a matter of fact, the skin of the beaver was from the earliest time the unit of exchange of the fur trade. Reason enough for the appearance of the beaver on the ensign of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Of course at first, the servants at the Company's posts were supplied with necessities from England by the annual ships; but soon the men stationed in the interior learned to kill and capture fish and animals sufficient for their use and received from abroad only such things as sugar, tea, tobacco and the like; then they learned to make the useful pemmican, a compound of pounded buffalo or caribou flesh mixed with fat, a standby of the north, especially used on journeys.

After a time vegetables were grown in post gardens and later farms were developed and live stock raised. Presently the Company's servants enjoyed all the comforts of home.

No prescribed uniform was worn in the Company's service, but on occasion, to impose their majesty upon the natives, the officers on their travels wore bright coats of red or blue, with shiny brass buttons; tall silk hats and gorgeous sashes. So clad they made royal progress by canoe or dog sled through the country of the Indians. This was done for a purpose and doubtless had its effect in the early days, but such conditions have long since passed. Governors—especially of distant posts—were, of course, great men; in 1713 they came to be known as Chief Factors. A lordly presence was a chief factor, if one may judge from descriptions of those times. He was great indeed, but he was not always exemplary, a fault of the age in which he lived, when a choleric temper was often considered an unfailing index of the masterful man; and a masterful man was needed at these outposts of the wilderness. Of one, it is said that he was wont to order ten lashes given a man on the smallest provocation; of another, once Governor at Moose Factory, that he declared he would whip any man, even a Company trader, without trial, if he chose. Indeed some of the early governors went so far as to strike the Indians themselves. Of course they were of necessity monarchs of all they surveyed, these chief factors, but not always above reproach. Perhaps considering the time and the conditions this was to be expected. Of the factory men it is said that on their religious, moral and intellectual side they were abominable. At one, "Only six men out of thirty could read; the men passed their time in eating and sleeping. Occasionally Indian squaws were smuggled into the fort at the peril of the Governor's displeasure, for immoral purposes. The displeasure of the Governor was not, however, excited on the grounds of morality, for it was nearly always the case that the governor had a concubine resid-

ing on the premises or near at hand and it was observed in 1749 by a servant of thirty years standing in the Company's employ that at each fort most of the half-breed children in the country claimed paternity of one or other of the factors of the Company."¹ But time has changed the life of these exiles of civilization; it has become a well regulated existence.

Early in its history the service of the Company suffered from a scarcity of men; probably the life was too hard; at all events, many gave up after trial in spite of all efforts made to hold them. Then it was that the Company turned to Scotland for recruits in the belief that these hardy men of the north were better suited than the southerners to fight conditions in the region of Rupert's Land. As a consequence, in 1711 a number of these men were recruited in the Orkney Islands; many other Scots joined service with the Company, until at last Scotchmen formed a very large percentage of the officers and men of the Hudson's Bay Company, as is shown by the names of posts, officers and explorers found in the history of the northwest. Indeed, it is largely to the men of Scotland that credit is due not only for service to the Hudson's Bay Company in trade, but also for the exploration and settlement of British North America in the north and beyond the Rocky Mountains.

The newcomers were brought out as apprentice clerks and, indeed, they are still brought out yearly from Scotland. Being as a rule youngsters without experience, they were given a five-year contract. At the end of this, those who proved themselves worthy were taken on as clerks for an additional three years with the prospect before each of advancing first to the position of trader; then junior chief trader; then chief trader; factor, chief factor and inspecting chief factor. Of these grades, the junior chief factor was the lowest of the so-called commissioned rank. All above that rank were rated

¹ Willson.

as Company officers; below it the white men and Indians employed were rated as clerks and servants. As a rule Indians served as trappers, guides, boatmen and interpreters, but both Indians and half-breeds occasionally rose to positions of responsibility.

"How well this system succeeded," says the present Governor, "we have ample testimony. 'It is impossible,' wrote Simon Dawson after visiting the Company's posts in the year 1858, 'not to admire the order and system which are everywhere observed in the management of the Company's posts and trade. It is a vast system of economy, carried out with the utmost sagacity and foresight in all its detail, and a system, too, which seems to work equally well under circumstances widely different. In the back settlements of Canada as on the stormy shores of the Labrador, among the warring tribes of the plains, or in the frozen regions of the Far North, it seems to be alike successful.'"¹

Later, changes were made in rank and titles and now it is reported that: "Owing to the changes following upon the deed of surrender, the ranks and titles of our line of promotion were abandoned, but we have thought it a pity to give up so excellent a tradition, and so have decided to revive them and also the commissions formerly given to the chief factors. These commissions will be restricted to the fur trade and will follow, as far as possible, the wording of 1821, with such changes as modern conditions require, and we feel sure that these much coveted parchments will be appreciated by many of our men, who carry on, as their predecessors have done, under the spell of the Company's service and the spacious surroundings of remote regions.

"Distinctions of honor are of no small consequence to loyal men who value the old traditions, and the old and dignified wording of these parchments serves to remind

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927. The report published at the time of this writing.

them, and us, that if today we are what we are, it is because the men of bygone times did not stop to count the cost, but followed the path of duty with a whole heart and a single mind.

"Apart from this step, which affects men of proved experience and a certain age, we have instituted a system of recruiting and training apprentices which is proving satisfactory, and we hope within a few years to make up for the shortage of late years, following upon the retirement of the older men, enlistments during the Great War, and the recent extensions of our fur trade."¹

In the early days, transportation was, of course, the hardest problem, for to travel through the wildernesses of Rupert's Land, before the advent of roads or railroad was a difficult matter. At first methods of transportation were primitive; consisting of canoes and boats in summer, of sleighs, dogsleds, toboggans and snow shoes of native pattern in the winter. In the unsettled country these methods are still in use. Brigades, as they were called, were early formed and sent out from the posts at regular intervals. They travelled from post to post, carried in the outfits and supplies for the season and brought out the furs. Those brigades, of which so much has been written in the story of the Northwest,² consisted in the open season of freight canoes and others carrying men and of York boats, as they were called, a device of Governor Simpson, long boats capable of carrying five tons of freight, and entrusted to the care of nine men who were skilful river men and good fighters on occasion. Governor Simpson made a state progress through his territory from York Factory on the Bay to Fort Vancouver on the west, in 1828, which long held the record for magnificence. The party travelled in two immense canoes, each containing nine picked paddlers. In addition to camping utensils, ample provisions and firearms, they carried an

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

abundance of wine for the gentlemen and spirits for the voyageurs. The Governor's canoe, gaudily painted, was easily discernible by its high prow, on which sat the guide of the expedition. As they floated along at incredible speed across the water came alternately the sound of the pibroch performed by the Governor's bagpipers in the first canoe, the mellow notes of the bugler in the second canoe, or the cheery chorus of "*A la Claire Fontaine*" sung by the voyageurs. Hundreds of Indians assembled at points on the waterway to witness their passing. The journey, with many stops for business, lasted a little under three months. Travelling in style, perhaps; but not in great comfort, the poor passengers were soaking wet when it was raining and sometimes when it wasn't. At every portage they and their baggage had to be carried ashore by wading voyageurs. At every rapids a canoe might be ripped open, or a bale of baggage lost. The traveller of today covers the same distance in days instead of months, and with no more risk or discomfort than if he were in his own home.

In contrast to this long and arduous canoe transportation is the "inland water transport service" of today, "plying along the Peace River, the Athabasca River, Slave River, and northward on the Great Mackenzie to Aklavik in the Western Arctic. This service during the summer months last year transported over 2,000 passengers, 8,000 tons of merchandise, and 35 tons of mail. These figures are not large, but the service is the only one of its kind in the regions far north of the fertile plains of Canada, embracing many hundreds of thousands of square miles, in which the widely scattered population probably numbers less than 10,000 all told."¹

In the "winter service we use horse and dog sleighs, which last winter (1927) travelled 140,000 miles and distributed 880 tons of supplies and 20 tons of mail. The work carried

¹ The report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

on by the men in this service is undertaken as a matter of course, without advertisement, as a part of the business. The men of the H. B. C. indeed take pleasure in these arduous journeys; thus for example, an English boy, who entered our service three years ago, wrote home to his parents before starting on a dog-sleigh journey of 400 miles: 'It is just the sort of life I like; so much excitement in it!'—a remark which suggests to us that the romance of the fur trade still appeals to the spirit of adventure in the heart of our people."¹

After the first early days came the Red River cart, a vehicle made entirely of wood; there were, besides, the carioles (a specie of sleigh) drawn by dog teams. White men, Indians and *coureurs de bois* manned the brigades, and often their journeys were remarkable. At times they were required to connect with other brigades, after weeks of travel, at some wilderness rendezvous, yet "none was ever more than a few days or a few miles out."² Mail packets, travelling on schedule time, were used for lighter and fleeter equipment, and carried news and good cheer to Company men wherever they were stationed, sometimes passing over a route of two thousand miles. Winter or summer was the same to them; and loss of a package was rare. In this strenuous work men and dogs starved, were frozen, drowned or devoured by wolves but the packet was nearly always brought in.³

"Even at the present day," says the last report, "upon the Company falls the responsibility of providing the scanty and scattered population of the great areas of the Northern Territories with the necessities of life, which could not be done without the extensive and costly transport service. Not only have we to stock ordinary supplies, but we have to be prepared for contingencies. We cannot afford to run

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

² Willson, *op. cit.*

³ I am indebted for much of this description to a pamphlet given at the Company's store at Winnipeg in the summer of 1925, called *Hudson's Bay Company's Historical Exhibit at Winnipeg*. Fifth edition, 1925.

short, because in a good fur year the successful hunters may demand a lot, while in times of famine or distress the improvident natives look to the Company for food, medicine and clothing, in exchange for their promise to bring us the results of their trapping. What we record in our accounts as 'Indian debt' is a large expense incurred in order to maintain the population. From this expenditure by the Company, the small trader benefits without any corresponding contribution.

"Our records show, however, that this contribution has always existed. Many years ago a wise Indian chief put the position in his own eloquent and picturesque way:

" 'Why,' he said to his tribe, 'do you trust these traders who come amongst you with beads and fire-water? They are but as the crows that come and are gone, but there are traders on the banks of the Great Lake yonder who are never absent, neither in our time nor in the time of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers. They are like the rock which cannot be moved and they give good goods and plenty, and they are always the same.' "¹

As activities were extended to the prairie country, the Red River carts came into common use for service across the frontier of the United States to the railroads which pushed into our West before those of Canada had been built. There was another great cartroad extending west to Portage la Prairie and on to Carlton House, a distance of some five hundred miles. This was later carried on to Edmonton, a total of a thousand miles, requiring a summer's travel to pass from Fort Garry (Winnipeg) and return, a journey now made in a day, as I remember. The Red River cart, as a freighter, was drawn by oxen; it carried a load of eight hundred pounds and made fifteen or twenty miles per day. But a lighter cart was also used, drawn by Indian ponies called Shaganappies, and sometimes a train of a hundred and fifty wagons travelled together as a caravan. These wagon trains

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

are a reminder of our own conquest of the West in the days of the prairie schooner, or covered wagon, and of the pony express. But in Canada there was no need of defense. The only enemies were nature and the wolves, for seldom it was that the bandit appeared, and never the hostile Indian.

Indeed, the conquest of the wilderness of Canada and its Indians is an example to the white race; a lesson, indeed, for future colonization; should such lesson again be needed in this overcrowded world. It is undoubted that the Red men of the Company's territories were mild compared to the Indians of the United States; the Iroquois, the Mohawks and later the fighting tribes of the plains, but Canadian methods and ours in treatment of the Indians have been different. The men of the North came to trade and, as friends and allies, to become co-partners of the Indians in the reaping of the only crop in which they were concerned—the furs. Though the Indians themselves differed, it may be that early treatment was a cause of our Indian wars, for hatred arouses hatred and war breeds war. It may be that the first and greatest cause of our Indian troubles was that the immigrant to the United States ever wanted land and more land, and the Indian, in danger of expulsion from regions desired, thought himself compelled to fight. Such was not the case in Rupert's Land, for the reason that the Hudson's Bay Company discouraged settlements as detrimental to the fur trade. There has been no Indian war in Canada, although occasionally "Want or deep injustice drove them (the Indians) to acts of barbarism" as shown by their treatment of the French. "On the whole they had no marked enmity to the white man and long displayed a remarkable and extremely welcome docility," so says the record. Credit for this, I think, should be given in large measure to the friendly and just treatment given, from the very first, by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Indians who came within its ken.

The accounts of manners, customs and characteristics of these Indians and of the Esquimaux of the North are interesting and instructive, but cannot be related in detail. Suffice it to say that the Crees and the Assiniboines were the people chiefly dealt with by the Company's traders, and although some commerce was had with the Sioux, the Blackfeet, the Crows and other tribes to the south, it was generally carried on without serious antagonism and certainly without war. The Indians possessed many admirable qualities: a sturdy independence, love of truth and freedom from vice except for occasional drunkenness, their great fault when in contact with rascally white traders. Though at first this was winked at, perhaps encouraged on occasion by the Company on account of conditions and competition in trade, drunkenness was later not only discountenanced, but severely condemned. Presently, too, religion was carried to the Indians by priests and missionaries; instruction was given and their condition bettered. Now, in fact, these poor people are often very religious, eager for church and school, and attempt better conditions of living, as I have seen at a Company's post of the North. Much has been due to the efforts of the Catholic Church. Also the Moravian Brothers have contributed much in an educational and generally helpful way in N. Labrador. After the cession of Canada to Great Britain in 1763, numbers of fur traders spread over that country, and into the north-western parts of the continent, and began even to encroach on the Hudson's Bay Company's territories. Three individual speculators finally combined into the North-West Fur Company of Montreal.

The fierce competition which at once sprang up between the companies was marked by features which sufficiently demonstrated the advantages of a monopoly in commercial dealings with savages, even although it is the manifest intent of the monopolists to retard the advance of civilization towards their hunting grounds.

The Indians were demoralized body and soul by the abundance of ardent spirits with which the French traders sought to attract them to themselves, the supply of furs threatened soon to be exhausted by this indiscriminate slaughter, even during the trading season, of both male and female animals; the worst passions of both whites and Indians were inflamed to their fiercest.

Malcolm McLeod, himself a Protestant and a lifelong servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, says, "While many of the Company who spent their lives in the service of the Indians have given freely of their gold to the missionary cause, it is no doubt due to the noble zeal and effective teaching of the Roman Catholic clergy, ever welcome at every post as brothers of the Cross in a common cause, that the Christian civilization of the North American Indian is mostly due, . . . the priest and the trader have in this case gone hand in hand, and commerce has in truth, in this instance, been handmaid to religion."¹

Life at the posts has changed, too. In the early years, partly because of manners and customs brought from the old country where life was by no means austere, partly because of the isolation and hardships of the posts themselves, conduct was not always exemplary. But all this has changed for the better and now no country village can be more proper than a Hudson's Bay post. The traders may not live precisely in a comity befitting a community of nuns, yet life and conduct are eminently respectable. Drinking is discouraged and regulated by the wise laws of Canada; and to the Indian it is taboo, though not entirely abolished, thanks to the presence of the universal curse, the bootlegger. Libraries are general, magazines and newspapers arrive regularly with the supplies. So regularly indeed, that it is said even in the old days one factor on the Labrador coast received his *London Times* each morning at breakfast, though it was a

¹ *Foreign Affairs*. Jan., 1928. P. 2, *New Caledonia*, Dodd.

year old, to be sure. Then there are games of cards, dominoes and the like, musical instruments of various kinds at hand and by now, no doubt, the radio screams constantly to the air. Besides these amusements there are of course hunting, fishing, boating and other water sports. Country dances are held at which the whites, the Indians and the breeds gather together and great festivities go on as I have seen. Besides these things, as happens whenever Englishmen and women gather together in one place, there are the field sports: tennis, bowling on the greens, skiing, tobogganing and a dozen other amusements. Evidently life at a Company post need never be too dull, resembling as it does life at the old frontier garrisons of our army, omitting the Indian outbreaks. But to continue the story.

Although for many years the influence and operations of the Hudson's Bay Company were confined to a limited territory, where posts and forts were few and confined almost exclusively to the shore of Hudson Bay, their number gradually increased; yet it was not until the close of the eighteenth century, after danger from the French had ended and rival traders from Canada began to increase to a dangerous extent that the old and aristocratic, but sleepy, Company awoke to the necessity of action. By this time the North-West Company, of which mention has been made, became a strong competitor in the fur trade and had reached far into the interior, establishing its posts in the north and beyond the Rocky Mountains, a region unoccupied by the old Company and indeed unknown to them until the early years of the nineteenth century. This company of merchants in Montreal having agreed to undertake the fur trade on their own account, were active and aggressive. But they presently met with difficulties; Mackenzie left them and became head of a new association called the XY Company, and about the year 1801 two rival Canadian trading associations were in the field. Some three years later, however, the

Northwesters and the XY consolidated, leaving only the North-West Company to contest the fur trade with the Hudson's Bay Company. For many years competition was carried on, at first without violence, but presently more active hostilities broke out, though little beyond quarrelling and occasional murder occurred. Then it was that the great post called Fort William¹ was built by the Northwesters, standing at Thunder Bay, on the north shore of Lake Superior, as it does today. Here the annual meeting of the partners of the North-West Company took place and here grew up the great market place of the company, where the Montreal traders gathered and the voyageurs and *bois brules* returned from distant posts. To these woodsmen as well as "to the wintering clerks and partners," says the chronicler, "after their hardships and fasts in the interior, Fort William seemed a foretaste of Paradise, and a hundred journals of a hundred traders tell again the tale of a dream of distant Fort William, which in the midst of cold, hunger and desolation, cheered the wanderer's heart and lightened his burdens. For the voyageurs it was all in all. To reach Fort William, enjoy the carnival and betwixt drink and riotous living dissipate the hard-earned wages of years was to them often the happiness of earth and heaven combined. . . . Many a time and oft while the feast was at its height, in the great dining room ornamented with pictures of hero and royalty and the wine bottles of the partners were being broached and the rum puncheons tapped, was a glance cast at some spot on the map which marked months of suffering, the death place of a comrade, the love of an Indian maiden, a thrilling adventure, a cruel massacre, painful solitude, great rejoicing or bitter disappointment."² But if the scene within was noisy and animated, that without beggared de-

¹ So named in honor of William McGillivray, principal partner, now become a Hudson's Bay post.

² Willson, *op. cit.*

scription. "Hundreds of voyageurs, soldiers, Indians and half-breeds were encamped together in the open, holding high revel. They hailed from all over the globe, England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, America, the African Gold Coast, the Sandwich Islands, Bengal, Canada; with Creoles, various tribes of Indians and a mixed progeny of *bois brules* or half-breeds."¹ And bright the lights shone over dark women and bold men one night of that fateful year of 1816; the revelers danced and sang, drank, made love and gambled in these distant wilds, as we are told they did one night of that same year in distant Belgium's capital. News came suddenly of the Northwesters' Waterloo: the massacre at Red River. At first it was acclaimed a victory, but it was felt to be the beginning of the Company's downfall. Lord Selkirk with a little force of disciplined men marched down on Fort William, arrested the swashbuckling leaders and pricked the bubble of rebellion once and for all. Yet a kindly, philanthropic gentleman was this fifth Earl of Selkirk, who sought nothing in the wilds of Rupert's Land beyond asylum for some of his own Scottish people, Highlanders who, in the early years of the century, had been turned out of holdings they had deemed their own and whom he hoped to settle in the farming country of far away Assiniboia. For this purpose he had come to possess a considerable holding of shares in the Hudson's Bay Company and had assumed certain responsibilities of settlement and administration of a new colony—a responsibility shared by the Company in certain directions that led to trouble. The Earl had obtained a grant of land in the Red River country. Both the North-West, and to a minor extent, the Hudson's Bay Company, were unfriendly to land settlement as hurtful to the fur trade, but with the difference that whereas the latter did little to hinder settlement, the former met it with vigorous and unscrupulous

¹Willson, *op. cit.*

opposition. In spite of this however, the first party of Scotch settlers arrived at York Factory in September of 1811, too late to journey on to the Red River before the snows came. They suffered severely during that winter and it was not until July of the next year that they reached their destination. On arrival, some established themselves on the bank of the river at a point now within the thriving city of Winnipeg, others continued on. At once the opposition of the North-westerners was shown, especially by truculent half-breed servants, a large number of whom had been sent into the country.

These *bois brules* (burnt wood) or Metis as they had come to be called, were a hard and difficult lot, very hostile to the settlers. A band of them appeared on the scene, painted, horned and dressed like savages, met the Scotchmen and warned them under penalties to leave the country. The Scotchmen complied, going to Pembina where their leader had preceded them, and so the first attempt at settlement was a failure. But a second followed. Men arrived after a distressing voyage by sea and hardship by land, and to each head of a family was given a hundred acres of land, an Indian pony, a gun, bayonet and ammunition. He was told to hold on, each to his own. They had come with the idea of farming, but no farming implements were at hand, consequently the second brigade, like the first, went on to Pembina for the winter. Now the wily North-westerners tried to tempt them to desert into their own service, and they also tried to persuade the Indians to rise against them. Two partners of the company hovered around, became very active and at last, accompanied by a band of Cree Indians, themselves dressed as British officers and surrounded by a party of *bois brules* under the leadership of a half-breed named Cuthbert Grant, attacked the fort of the colonists, fired on the farmers' holdings, pillaged their homes and drove off the cattle. Whereupon the Scotchmen moved to a trading post

of the Hudson's Bay Company nearby; but the settlement was destroyed.

Soon, however, a new brigade arrived accompanied by Robert Semple, who had been appointed by the Hudson's Bay Company to the control of all the factories of Rupert's Land. At about the same time Lord Selkirk came out in person and approached the Governor General of Canada for military protection for his settlers, but was refused. Of this appeal for protection, it is said, "the step was a significant one," since the Hudson's Bay Company had maintained peace throughout its vast territory without the employment of an armed force. Conditions had changed when colonization was attempted at Red River. Drummond (the Governor General) refused to render assistance, perhaps because he dreaded the powerful influence of the North-West Company; and disappointed, Lord Selkirk engaged some mercenaries left over from the American Revolution and with them proceeded to the Red River. Too late, however, to protect the region, for Robert Semple, on his mission of inspection of Hudson's Bay Company forts, had marched into the Red River country and reached a place known as Seven Oaks. Here with a score of men carrying arms but no ammunition, (a silly thing for even a tenderfoot fresh from England), he was met by Cuthbert Grant and his ruffians; whereupon Semple and most of his followers were killed and their bodies horribly mutilated. The war ended. The colonists to the number of two hundred set out for Hudson Bay and the victors went on rejoicing to Fort William. Yet this was not the end. The plucky Earl with four officers and eighty soldiers turned back on Fort William, arrested the chief and other leaders and captured the stronghold. "A fort," says the Earl, "which had served, the last of any in the British Dominion, as an asylum for banditti and murderers and the receptacle of their plunder."¹ This was in reality the end of

¹ Sir William Schooling, K. B. E., *The Hudson's Bay Company*, London, 1920, p. 6.

the truculent, over-confident North-West Company, and now the old chartered Company came into its own. But the struggle had been long and severe and ruinous to both, and it still smoldered, for such was the hatred of the North-westers for Lord Selkirk that it was not until after his death in 1820 that hope arose for a settlement of the difficulties. In that year, a meeting was held at Fort William and after a stormy session, delegates were selected by the North-West Company to confer with representatives in London who had prepared a certain "Deed Poll"¹ by which an agreement was made possible between the two companies. It was an amalgamation in fact; but what an amalgamation! A North-wester said of it: "This is not amalgamation but submersion! We are drowned men!"² And crushed they were as a trading company, though the deed poll was to endure for only twenty-one years; yet the North-West Company disappeared from the scene, the fighting troubles of the fur trade ceased and "the rough and adventurous Northmen now found themselves part of a huge machine operated with sleepless vigilance by a Governor and Committee in London."

At last, in 1831, mutually exhausted, the companies amalgamated, obtaining a license to hold for 21 years the monopoly of the trade in the vast regions lying to the west and north-west of the older Company's grant. In 1838 the Hudson's Bay Company acquired the sole rights for itself, and obtained a new license, also for 21 years; on the expiring of this it was not renewed, and since 1859 the district has been open to all.

The license to trade did not, of course, affect the original possessions of the Company.

The heads of the companies came together, but not the servants, and it required all the ability and skill of Governor

¹ A deed poll, in accordance with English law, was a deed made and executed by one party only; so called because the paper or parchment is "polled" or cut even, not indented. Applied to a legal writing or deed executed by a single party and therefore not indented.—*New English Dictionary, Murray.*

² Sir William Schoobing.



THE GOVERNOR OF RED RIVER IN A LIGHT CANOE, 1824



FORT CHIPWEYAN

George Simpson (later Sir George Simpson) one of the great men of the Company, to unite the companies in fact as they had been in law. In 1821 the rival fur companies united, bringing to an end a war which had been waged relentlessly for years. George, afterwards Sir George, Simpson was the first governor of the merged companies. He ruled as absolute monarch over the whole of Rupert's Land and the Northwest from Labrador to the Pacific Ocean, and from the headwaters of the Mississippi and Missouri to the Arctic. When he made a tour of the fur-posts he travelled in state as a true king. Bugles announced his coming to a fort; his entourage of fast-driven canoes swept to the landing to the stirring strains of bagpipes, guns boomed, and the assembled traders and Indians welcomed him with shouts. There is little doubt that the survival of the Hudson's Bay Company was for the best interests of Canada and its people, both whites and Indians. Although it is said, perhaps truly, that "for keen, hard, shrewd efficiency, the North-West Company was perhaps the most terribly effective organization that had ever arisen in the New World," yet it is also said that "the Northwesters did not hesitate to employ violence, systematic robbery and even murder against the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company. . . . They endeavored to prevent the Indians having access to the Company's posts; destroyed fishing lines and nets on which subsistence largely depended—but in vain—to terrorize the servants of the Company as they had the Indians."¹ Competition was not always of this character, but "had the Nor'-Westers become supreme, it is by no means improbable that, considering the character of the men in their employment, the fur trade would have been killed by the extermination of the fur-bearing animals; the Indians would have been reduced to want; the gradual settlement of the country would have been opposed; and the civilization and progress of the Northwest.

¹Sir William Schooling, K. B. E., *The Hudson's Bay Company*, London, 1920, p. 6.

would have been at least deferred, or of a different character."

So ended the fighting Northwesters. Their name is but a memory, yet their achievements in the settlements of the northern wilderness and the records of such great explorers as Mackenzie, Fraser and a score of others will never be lost while the history of Canada lasts. Under the terms of the Deed Poll, the immediate control of the Company's affairs in its own territory was lodged with a Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land. The number of the Company's posts was largely increased by transfer, since during its comparatively short life, the North-West Company had far surpassed the old Company in energy and activity and had planted nearly all of the posts of the north and west now existing. Even as late as 1813 none of the Hudson's Bay people had pushed into the west as far as Athabasca and nearly all the posts of the interior west of the Rocky Mountains owe their origin to the Northwesters.

As we have seen, the fur trade of Rupert's Land had from the earliest days been considered so great a prize that various rivals entered the field, and the story of the struggle of trappers and traders against the forces of the north, as well as unhappily against each other, are many and thrilling. Indeed, the courage and hardihood of these men add an admirable page to their country's history. Through their efforts, the wilderness was opened, its Indians redeemed, slowly at first, but with the control of the Hudson's Bay Company from ocean to ocean, by leaps and bounds. In the year 1856 there existed 154 trading posts. Times and conditions were changing, however, and in 1863 a reorganization was effected. The capital stock was increased to £2,000,000 sterling.¹ The most notable event in the history of the Company was yet to come. It was an inevitable result of the confederation of the British Provinces of North America, which was effected July 1, 1867. Then a new star swam into the northern

¹Originally £10,500.

heavens. The great Dominion of Canada was born and with its birth the Hudson's Bay Company disappeared as overlord of Rupert's Land and of the great Northwest. The Company that had been absolute lord and proprietor of a huge territory ruled for two hundred years without military system, "Agreed to surrender to Her Majesty all rights of government, property, etc., in Rupert's Land, and also all similar rights in any other part of British North America not comprised in Rupert's Land, Canada or British Columbia."¹

"When federation was accomplished, the Dominion of Canada comprised the four provinces—Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward was added in 1873. The areas of these five provinces, with their boundaries as they existed in 1867, was six or seven times that of England. Today the Dominion of Canada is 70 times larger than England, and by far the greater part—if, indeed, we may not say all—of this difference is due to the surrender by your Company in 1870 of Rupert's Land, as defined in the Charter, and to the lands which your Company saved to the Empire by prior claim or occupation—the Arctic regions in the North and British Columbia in the West."²

This federation was accomplished at a Conference presided over by Etienne Pascal Tache, a veteran of the War of 1812, who expressed the loyalty of his countrymen when he said: "The last gun to be fired for British supremacy in British North America would be fired by a French-Canadian."

In return for this surrender by the Hudson's Bay Company, the Canadian Government paid a sum of £300,000 sterling, allowed it to retain its posts and stations with a block of land adjoining each, and gave to it one-twentieth part of the land within the Fertile Belt. Such became the

¹ Sir William Schooling, K. B. E., *The Hudson's Bay Company*, London, 1920, p. 6.

² Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

status of the Hudson's Bay Company brought about by a voluntary transfer which, says the historian, "was the fitting and inevitable sequel of the Company's own achievement. It was the work of the Company, more than anything else, that had discovered and developed the great country which at last and rightly, determined that it must govern itself." To this it might well be added that the act was the desired and logical outcome of the Charter granted by Charles II; and foreseen in the days when these charters were looked upon as the instruments of the nation to bring under the flag the wilderness that lay beyond the seas. The surrender was effected without difficulty though with some grumbling, but on the whole peacefully, except for a disturbance on the part of the people of the Red River settlements, chiefly French half-breeds under the influence of Louis Riel, a Metis. Dissatisfied with arrangements made between the Government of Canada and the Company, the malcontents seized the road between Pembina and Fort Garry (Winnipeg), took possession of the latter and threatened trouble. They were ignorant half-breeds, attached to the old Company, and the old order of things that was about to change to their hurt, and it is said they were entitled to some sympathy. Rebellion threatened, the situation grew dangerous, and Donald Smith, later Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company (the Right Honourable Donald Alexander Smith, First Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal, etc., etc.), was sent to Red River as Special Commissioner to investigate conditions. He wisely judged an ugly situation and recommended the use of troops. Colonel Wolseley, afterward Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, set out in May, 1870, from Toronto and after a difficult march reached Fort Garry with his command in August, only to find the revolt ended, the rebels gone. Difficulties disappeared and later, about 1870, a third Deed Poll was drawn up, suited to altered conditions (a second having been signed in 1834) and the

Company continued serenely on its new way. Of the third Deed Poll the Governor of the Company says: "That deed was authorised by, and has the force of, an imperial statute, and may be regarded as a constitutional settlement between your Company, the Imperial Government, and the Canadian authorities, under which your Company—whilst surrendering Rupert's Land and its rights of government therein to Canada—retained large tracts of land in Canada and was secured in its right to trade there without hindrance."

Under the terms of the Deed of Surrender, dated November 19, 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company surrendered to the Queen's Most Gracious Majesty, all the rights of government and other rights, privileges, liberties, franchises, powers and authorities, granted or purported to be granted to the said Government and Company by the said recited Letters Patent of His Late Majesty King Charles II; and also all similar rights which may have been exercised or assumed by the said Government and Company in any parts of British North America, not forming part of Rupert's Land or of Canada, or of British Columbia, and all the lands and territories within Rupert's Land (except and subject as in the said terms and conditions mentioned) granted or purported to be granted to the said Governor and Company by the said Letters Patent, subject to the terms and conditions set out in the Deed of Surrender, including the payment to the Company by the Canadian Government of the sum of £300,000 sterling and the transfer of Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada, the retention by the Company of its posts and stations, with a right of selection of a block of land adjoining each post in conformity with a schedule annexed to the Deed of Surrender; and the right to claims in any township or district within the Fertile Belt in what land is set out for settlement, grants of land not exceeding one-twentieth part of the land so set out. The boundaries of the

¹ 1926.

Fertile Belt were in terms of the Deed of Surrender to be as follows: "On the south by the United States boundary; on the west by the Rocky Mountains; on the north by the northern branch of the Saskatchewan; on the east by Lake Winnipeg, the Lake of the Woods, not the waters connecting them," and "the Company was to be at liberty to carry on its trade without hindrance in its corporate capacity; and no exceptional tax was to be placed on the Company's land, trade or servants."

In 1872, in terms of the Dominion Lands Act of that year, it was mutually agreed in regard to the one-twentieth of the lands in the Fertile Belt reserved to the Company under the terms of the Deed of Surrender, that the division should be made in fixed way. The details are too long to find place here. It may be said in conclusion that as the matter stands, "in every fifth township in the said territory; that is to say in those townships marked 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 and so on in regular succession northerly from the International Boundary, the whole of sections Nos. 8 and 26, and in each and every of the other townships the whole section No. 8 and the south half and north-west quarter of section 26 (except in cases hereafter provided for) shall be known and designated as the lands of the said Company.¹"

With the surrender of its ancient rights, "It seemed to some as if the glories of the old Company had departed, but, instead of this the surrender marked the opening of a new era in which the fur trade was to continue, and two features—those of land and stores—were to begin. The record of fifty years is proof sufficient that the greatness of the Hudson's Bay Company, so far from ending, was commencing afresh. And by this surrender the Company as it seemed had lost nothing but on the other hand had gained much," for, says its historian again, "the affairs which the Governor and Committee control today are not less but greater than those

¹1926.

of former times. The influence and prestige which it enjoys have been won by its own efforts. They are a distinction and a privilege of a better kind than any that could be conferred by the charter of a King."¹

Among the achievements of the Hudson's Bay Company, the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, from Winnipeg west to the Pacific, may also be included, for as a matter of fact, this was largely due to the efforts of Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal. The need of a railway from sea to sea was also seen by Georges Etienne Cartier who, when the British Columbia delegates to the Conference for the federation spoke of asking for a railway line only to the foot of the Rockies, and a wagon-road thence to the Pacific, replied: "Ask for a railway all the way, and you will get it." The vision of these men became reality in the achievement of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

So the Company has prospered. In 1856 there were 154 trading-posts under the Company's control, as has been recorded; by 1872 this number had diminished to 144. Now, however, there are rather more than 200, the greatest number in its history. These are scattered from Labrador to the Pacific and from Herschel Island in the Arctic, to Rosemont on Georgian Bay at latitude 47.8°. Some are new, but many of historic name still live. Of these are York Factory and Moose Factory which look out across the sullen waters of Hudson Bay, as they have looked since the days of Charles of England; there is nearby Churchill, and inland there are others, of which the celebrated Chipewyan on far away Athabasca is one. Here Mackenzie ruled and Franklin dreamed of the North; and its story looms large in the romantic history of Canada.² Other forts there are, sometimes replaced by town or city and others that are lost to sight, but

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

² Franklin in 1819 reached Fort Chipewyan and set out from there across the Arctic slope for the Coppermine River which he descended as Hearne had done, to the frozen sea; again three years later he was a guest at this fort.

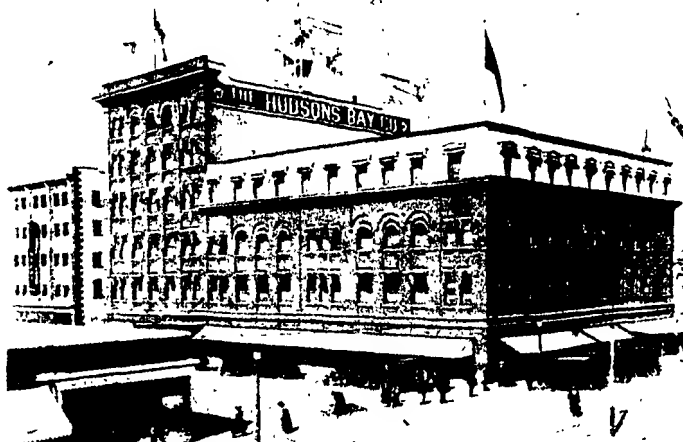
whose names and the deeds done around them remain, and will remain while history lasts. Of these are Fort Prince of Wales, where England's pride fell to the dust, Forts Garry and Vancouver, on whose sites great cities stand; Victoria of world-known charm; Edmonton and many others.

But conditions change; farmers and settlers have pushed back the frontiers of the fur trade and forts and trading posts have become general stores which provide for the wants of people gathered around them in villages and towns, sometimes in considerable cities, in exchange for money, not by barter. Great stores of the departmental type have grown up and their business grows. The first was erected at Winnipeg in 1881, where a city of some 300,000 people has sprung up like a mushroom from the prairie sod and where stood in the years gone by, at the junction of the Red and Assiniboin Rivers, Forts Rouge, Gibraltar, Douglas and the celebrated Garry now gone. The first great department store erected was followed by many others; there are two in Saskatchewan, at Yorktown and Saskatoon; in Alberta, a large store at Calgary, another at Edmonton and one at Lethbridge. British Columbia simply bristles with them. Victoria, Kamloops, Vernon and Nelson each has its own and a large shop stands at Vancouver worthy of Paris itself. It is so sophisticated that I recall a customer who bought there a pair of shiny evening shoes brought from England, a trinket from Japan, looked at a hat from Paris and swallowed a grape from California. Also, there are the great department stores of the cities of the east. Well, indeed, has the growth of the Hudson's Bay Company exhibited the change from the wilderness to civilization, from old methods to new and demonstrated the need of continual adjustment to changing conditions. It is the sign of healthy and vigorous life and it proves that the Hudson's Bay Company is a going concern.

Another industry mentioned by the Governor in his last annual report is the canning of salmon: "We are collecting



OLD FORT EDMONTON. BUILT 1811



PRESENT STORE, EDMONTON

this salmon with our own vessels in the waters of Newfoundland and Labrador, treating it in our factory in St. John's, by a method of our own, which preserves all the qualities of freshly caught fish. It represents a remarkable advance upon the unsavoury article known as pickled salmon, which was the only form in which we have hitherto been able to offer the fish taken in the course of our trade at points where very often the inhabitants have little else wherewith to purchase clothing, food and the other necessities of life. Our principal market for the Hubay and Labrador salmon is in the City of London."¹

Still the Company does not thrive on trade alone and gives over to its stockholders the very comfortable dividends they enjoy. It has other resources, the greatest of which is land. By the deed of surrender, some seven millions of acres of land were granted to the Company, lying in the Fertile Belt alone. These grants were not confined to one great zone, but as rapidly as the country was surveyed and townships laid out, sections were set aside for the Company in every township between Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg and their connecting waters, west to the Rocky Mountains; and between the North Saskatchewan and the boundary of the United States. This region comprises the so-called Fertile Belt. The sale and settlement of this acreage has fairly kept pace with the extension of the railways and the growth of the country. More than three and one-half million acres have been sold since the deed of surrender (up to 1923) and it is estimated that upwards of seventy-five thousand people are numbered in the families settled on farms so purchased. Besides this nearly three and one-half million acres of land yet remain to be sold. Approximately the two million, eight hundred thousand acres of land still unsold are being offered at an average price of \$17 per acre.² The Company's policy

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

² These statistics are taken from the edition of 1925 of the handbook entitled, *Hudson's Bay Company's Historical Exhibit at Winnipeg*, visited by the writer in the summer of 1925.

is to discourage speculative purchase by men who are not actual settlers, and in the years since the Company has been a seller of lands, it has been of much assistance to settlers and a force in the development of Canada.

Regarding these farms in the Fertile Belt, the Governor says: "We commenced the year (1926) with 2,819,000 acres of unsold farm lands; during the twelve months we have taken back 137,000 under 'Cancelled sales.' This represents a further stage in the process of clearing up land purchased during boom periods by speculators who have failed to pay more than the preliminary installments. We have still some outstandings of like nature which may increase our unsold acreage, but the future number of such revestments is not likely to be so large as it has been during the last few years. We have sold 271,000 acres and we have also surrendered to the Government 8,300 acres under the agreement of December 23, 1924.

"We therefore close the year with 2,780,000 acres of unsold farm lands dotted in lots of 640 acres, or less, throughout what is known as the Fertile Belt. Over 90 per cent of these lands is suitable for farming, and our holdings of really poor land have been reduced to less than 5 per cent of the total. There is an impression that land for farming purposes in Canada is unlimited in quantity. So it may be, if distance from market and price are not considered. Careful survey shows, however, that the acreage still available at a reasonable price, within reasonable access of the transportation facilities, is not very great, so that it will be satisfactory to know that over three-fourths of (the) acreage is favourably placed; in this respect, lying as it does within 10 miles of a railway line, taking that distance as the crow flies."¹

"... All the problems of Canada depend to some extent upon an increase of population for their solution, particularly in the great West, and the Winnipeg office of the Hudson's

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, presented June, 1927.

Bay Company Overseas Settlement, Limited (formed in co-operation with the Cunard Steamship Company for the purpose of promoting migration and settlement) is fulfilling its functions and has been instrumental in placing some hundreds of settlers.

"... In the autumn of last year (1926), Lord Clarendon, Under-Secretary of State for the Dominions, made an extensive tour of Canada with the object of seeing at first hand the results of the Three Thousand Family Scheme, instituted several years ago with the special object of settling British families in Canada. He was so entirely satisfied that upon his return he expressed the hope, which was later expressed by the Dominion Government, that large landholders might render assistance by making their land available for the continuation of this scheme on a larger scale.

"As the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and ourselves are the only large holders of lands in the prairie Provinces, we agreed upon a joint response, and the two companies offered to the Department of Immigration sufficient land for 3,500 farms, of 160 acres each, on terms of deferred payment. Such an offer with the wide choice of land which the two companies were able to give had its advantages, and in return we sought certain concessions in procedure, which we thought would facilitate the flow of population to the Great West. . . . The British Government has been very anxious to continue this Three Thousand Family Scheme and are prepared to go a long way in granting assistance to settlers under the Empire Settlement Act, but we have not yet been able to bring about the necessary arrangements with the Canadian authorities."¹

Underlying parts of the holdings of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Fertile Belt, are, of course, minerals such as coal, iron, oil, gas and sodium sulphate, probably others, but when land is sold for farming purposes, mineral rights

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

are reserved, separate agreements being made for mining. Some such action, I believe, is also taken by the Government in the sale of forest lands. Referring to oil, the Governor's report says: "Under drilling leases (granted in 1926) three wells have already been commenced in widely separated and fairly promising fields . . . although they have not yet shown any indication of oil. . . . We (the Company) have entered into an agreement for a geological survey and study of the Provinces within which our lands are situated, and especially in those areas in which conditions appear to favor the presence of oil, . . . where buried ranges and hills may form the fundamental geological conditions for the accumulation of oil. . . . For the time being we are only engaged in a process of investigation."¹

So much for the statistics given in the last report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. To discuss further the present commercial status of the Hudson's Bay Company would require a considerable volume of itself. Suffice it to say that after its many struggles, the Company has settled down to its new field of work with its people strong and loyal. Its men fought for England in South Africa, and the story of their numbers and services in the Great War is grand. Indeed, from experience, I have come to think that well nigh every other young man one meets in the outlying parts of Canada has been a soldier; and the Company furnished its share. It also took an active part in the war in securing and transporting supplies for the French Government under agreement with the Ministers of Finance and War, by which arrangement the Company was appointed agent of the French Government in the purchase of supplies and was entrusted with buying in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as with transporting grain, flour and other food stuffs that France required. Its service to the cause of the Allies was great indeed and thus

¹ Report of the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, June, 1927.

at last did the Hudson's Bay Company give mighty aid to the mother country; to France, against whom she had struggled in the early days and to the men of the Allies drawn from the ends of the earth, who fought to save a flaming world. Then did the old trading Company put forth the powers of a state and a strength undreamed of in the days of its chartered existence. Then, too, did it give proof to the nation whence it sprang of its loyalty and honesty by returning to Caesar the things that were Caesar's; to its sovereign, the privilege and estate received in trust from another sovereign two centuries before. It was an act of greatness, since it was reality and not a gesture; for to return meant to possess, and to possess through the years meant the achievement of success in the difficult field of conquest in North America; conquest where great nations had dismally failed. First Spain, once greatest of them all in possessions, driven out like chaff before the wind by its own weakness and folly and by the revolt of its mongrel and degenerate descendants; then France, banished at the stroke of a sword mightier than her own; then blundering England—but the England of another day—stripped of once loyal colonies because of the abuse of a tyrannical government acting under a stupid and obstinate king. Not so the Great Company, traders though they were, yet an instrument of government better than government itself, since by it was conquered and retained half the continent of North America; its fastnesses opened, its people brought within the pale of Christian civilization, and its wildernesses made in some part to blossom as the rose, and all this achieved by the methods of peaceful trade and fair dealing. All this willingly restored to the Crown whence it came, a grand conquest of the white man and a conquest that looms large and unique in the history of the war-torn continent of America.

In his report of last year, the Governor says: "The story of your Company, which goes back to the beginning of

Canada, is bound up with its history and growth. Your flag was carried across plain and mountain from the Atlantic to the Pacific and has flown over insignificant posts which have since become towns, cities and capitals of great provinces. You have shared in their struggles and adversities, in their development, and in their good fortune, and in my opinion there can be no reason—save only lack of faith, courage or endeavour—why you should not share in the destiny which lies before them and before the great Dominion.

So may it be said that a blessing to America as well as to England rested in the foreseeing effort of great Rupert, who on that distant day of June of the year 1668, blithely shot out in a little skiff from Wapping Old Stair to board the *Nonsuch* ketch, lying in the stream, her prow pointing across the western ocean, and in the captain's cabin, over a bottle of Madeira, drank success to the coming enterprise. It was a toast to trade, to that mighty force which by the hand of the Hudson's Bay Company was to give, in large measure, half a continent to England, and later by the hands of the East India Company the scepter of Empire to England's Queen. Ever, by the peaceful conquest of merchant and trader in all quarters of the world, to give profit, power and honor to England's people. That force, to which, rather than to the force of arms, England has owed her grandeur and well being throughout the centuries of brilliant life that began when her ships and her trade first found their way to distant shores beyond the seas.

